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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Bill Tobler et al.
Application No. 10/780,301
Filed: February 17, 2004
Attorney Docket No.: 81091394

: DECISION ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition to reset the response time and avoid abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(a) and 1.137(b), filed September 14, 2005.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.
The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)" or "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b)." This is not a final agency decision.

This application became abandoned on June 19, 2005, for failure to file a timely response to the non-Final Office Action mailed March 18, 2005, which set a three (3) month period for reply. The instant petition and this decision precede the mailing of a Notice of Abandonment.

Petitioner asserts that the non-Final Office Action was never received.

UNAVOIDABLE DELAY

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

- (1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with §

1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof;

- (2) the petition fee as set forth in § 1.17(l);
- (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and
- (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in § 1.20(d)) required pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section.

This petition lacks items (3) above.

With regard to item (3), decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.¹

The showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a). Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure or mail, telegraph, telefacsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office.²

¹In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

²Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

Petitioner asserts that the Notice mailed March 18, 2005 was never received. A review of the record indicates no irregularity in the mailing of the Office action, and in the absence of any irregularity in the mailing, there is a strong presumption that the Office action was properly mailed to the address of record. This presumption may be overcome by a showing that the Office action was not in fact received. The showing required to establish the failure to receive an Office action must include a statement from the inventor that the Office communication was not received and attesting to the fact that a search of the docket records indicates that the Office communication was not received. A copy of the docket record where the non-received Office communication would have been entered had it been received and docketed must be attached to and referenced in petitioner's statement.³

Petitioner has not submitted additional evidence to corroborate the allegation of non-receipt. As the showing presented is insufficient to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a), the petition will be dismissed.

UNINTENTIONAL DELAY

Effective December 1, 1997, the provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b) now provide that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition filed under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof. In an application abandoned for failure to pay the publication fee, the required reply must include payment of the publication fee.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m);

(3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and

³M.P.E.P. § 711.03(c); See Notice entitled "Withdrawing the Holding of Abandonment When Office Actions Are Not Received," 1156 O.G. 53 (November 16, 1993).

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c).

It is acknowledged that petitioner claims to not have received the non-Final Office Action mailed March 19, 2005 however, while petitioner has not proven non-receipt and thus won't be able to prevail on an argument of unavoidable delay, petitioner will also not be able to prevail on an argument of unintentional delay. Under both the unavoidable standard and the unintentional standard, the instant petition lacks item (1), or the required reply to the non-Final Office Action.

Additionally, the fee set by statute for a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is \$250.00 for a small entity and \$500.00 for a large entity. The fee set by statute for a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) is \$750.00 for a small entity and \$1,500.00 for a large entity. Thus, pursuant to the authorization to charge petitioner's deposit account, deposit account no. 06-1505 has been charged in the amount of \$1,870.00 (the difference between the petition fee paid, \$130.00, and that which was due under both 37 CFR 1.137(a) and 1.137(b)).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop Petitions
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By FAX: (571) 273-8300
Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries concerning this matter may be directed to the undersigned Petitions Attorney at (571) 272-3212.



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